

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8567

INFO AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6518

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR SREF CVIS UR IS US RO

SUBJECT: GOI OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON ROMANIAN AND SOVIET JEWISH
EMIGRATION

REF: TEL AVIV 2211

SUMMARY: SPECIAL ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER TOLD EMBOFF THAT
GOI NOW FEELS THAT EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA MAY SOON COME TO
VIRTUAL HALT. HOWEVER, OFFICIAL OPINIONS ARE DIVIDED
WHETHER THIS IS DUE TO GOR RESTRICTIONS OR LACK OF INTEREST
ON PART OF REMAINING JEWISH COMMUNITY. WITH REGARD TO
SOVIET EMIGRATION, ADVISOR DID NOT EXPECT ANY SIGNIFICANT
CHANGES AND ATTRIBUTED CURRENT SOVIET EMIGRATION POLICY
TO STATUS OF US-SOVIET RELATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. JEHEMIA LEVANON, SPECIAL ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER AND
FOREIGN MINISTER ON SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN EMIGRATION,
TOLD EMBOFF OCT 9 THAT ON BASIS OF PRELIMINARY APPLICATION
FOR EMIGRATION AND PASSPORTS ISSUED BY GOR SINCE AUGUST,
GOI NOW FEARS THAT EMIGRATION FROM ROMANIA MAY COME TO
VIRTUAL HALT BY END OF YEAR. HE CITED SEPTEMBER FIGURES
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OF 39 APPLICATIONS AND 96 PASSPORTS GRANTED COMPARED WITH

423 APPLICATIONS AND 549 PASSPORTS GRANTED IN JULY AS EVIDENCE THAT EMIGRATION PIPELINE MAY SOON RUN DRY. HE ALSO SAID THAT ISRAEL EMBASSY BUCHAREST IS AWARE OF NUMBER OF INSTANCES WHEN PASSPORTS ALREADY CONTAINING ISRAELI VISAS WERE CONFISCATED AT LAST MOMENT BEFORE DEPARTURE.

2. LEVANON HAD NO EXPLANATION FOR THIS SUDDEN GOR RETURN TO RESTRICTING JEWISH EMIGRATION AFTER THE MAY-JULY LIBERALIZATION ATTRIBUTED TO US CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL OF MFN STATUS. ISRAELI GOVERNMENT LACKING OTHER MEANS OF PERSUASION POINTED OUT TO GOR THAT RESUMPTION OF RESTRICTIONS ON EMIGRATION COULD JEOPARDIZE ROMANIAN MFN STATUS, BUT GOR OFFICIALS APPEARED UNCONCERNED.

3. SOMEWHAT IN CONTRADICTION TO LEVANON'S STATEMENT AND RECENT EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN BY JEWISH AGENCY, OFFICIALS, MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS YITZHAK RAPHAEL SAID IN OCT 9 ISRAELI RADIO INTERVIEW, UPON RETURNING FROM ROMANIA, THAT GOR AND ROMANIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS HAD ASSURED HIM THAT THERE WERE NO RESTRICTIONS ON JEWISH EMIGRATION. RAFAEL NOTED THAT TOTAL NUMBER OF JEWISH COMMUNITY HAD NOW SHRUNK TO LESS THAN 70,000, MOSTLY ELDERLY PERSONS NOT INTERESTED IN LEAVING. (NOTE: 1617 ROMANIANS HAD ARRIVED IN ISRAEL BY END OF SEPTEMBER.)

4. COMMENTING ON SOVIET EMIGRATION, LEVANON SAID THAT NUMBER OF VISAS ISSUED HAD REMAINED FAIRLY CONSTANT, AVERAGING ABOUT 1,000 PER MONTH (OF WHOM 600 ARRIVE IN ISRAEL) THROUGHOUT THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1975 AND HE DID NOT EXPECT ANY CHANGE IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE. MONTHLY NOTARIZED REQUESTS FOR INVITATIONS (VIZOVs) HAD DECLINED FROM OVER 4,000 PER MONTH DURING FEBRUARY-MAY PERIOD TO BELOW 3,200 IN SEPTEMBER. HE ATTRIBUTED DECLINE OF APPLICATIONS BY ONE THIRD TO PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST JEWISH EMIGRATION AND DIRECT INTIMIDATION OF APPLICANTS OR POTENTIAL APPLICANTS BY SOVIET AUTHORITIES. (FOR MONTHLY STATISTICS SEE SEPTTEL.)

5. LEVANON INTERPRETED SOVIET POLICY RE JEWISH EMIGRATION AS DEPENDING PRINCIPALLY ON STATUS OF U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS
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RATHER THAN ON CHANGES IN SOVIET-ISRAELI RELATIONS. THUS EVEN RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WOULD NOT NECESSARILY AFFECT EMIGRATION FLOW. HE SPECULATED THAT THE OUTFLOW RATE DURING THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS COULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY SUCH MATTERS AS SOVIET NERVOUSNESS OVER PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT TO PEKING AND CURRENT RECOVERY OF U.S. INITIATIVE IN EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN AREA. HOWEVER, CONCLUSION OF SATISFACTORY LONG RANGE GRAIN DEAL AND IMPROVEMENT

IN TRADE AND CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS COULD LEAD TO SOME LIBERAL-
IZATION OF EMIGRATION.

6. WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS JUDGEMENT REGARDING IMPACT OF JACKSON
AMENDMENT ON EMIGRATION, HE NOTED THAT ORIGINALLY IT HAD
SEEMED TO WORK BUT, THAT WHEN CONGRESS SHARPLY LOWERED SOVIET
EXIMPORT CREDIT LEVELS, THIS CAUSED STRONG RESENTMENT.
THIS ACT PROBABLY WAS PRIMARY REASON FOR SOVIET TURNABOUT ON
EARLIER PROMISE MADE BY GROMYKO TO SECRETARY KISSINGER.
COMMENT: ISRAELIS CLEARLY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DECLINE OF
SOVIET IMMIGRATION, BUT AFTER SETBACK TO JACKSON AMENDMENT
SEEM UNSURE HOW TO PROCEED. THE GOVERNMENT IS TRYING
TO COPE WITH SEVERE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THERE IS SOME
CONCERN THAT ABSORPTION OF NEW IMMIGRANTS COULD BECOME MORE
DIFFICULT DUE TO DECREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.
HOWEVER, SO FAR THIS CONCERN IS NOT AFFECTING SERIOUSLY
EITHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD OPEN DOOR POLICY.
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